NIRU
AND HER BABY MANGO TREE

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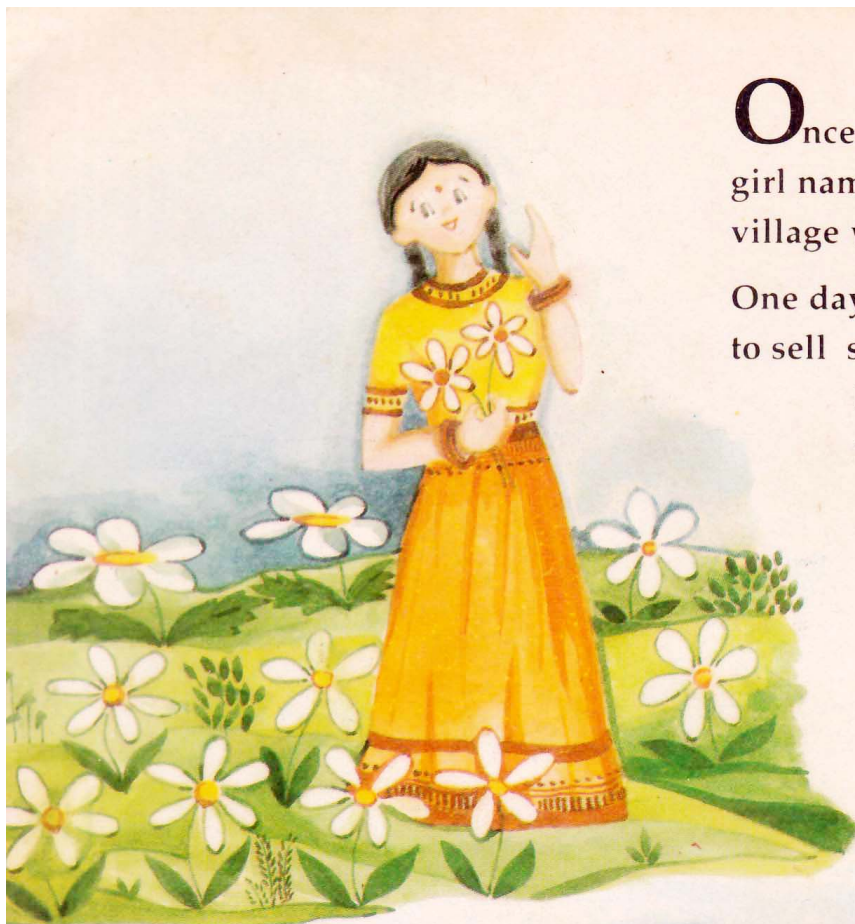Published by :

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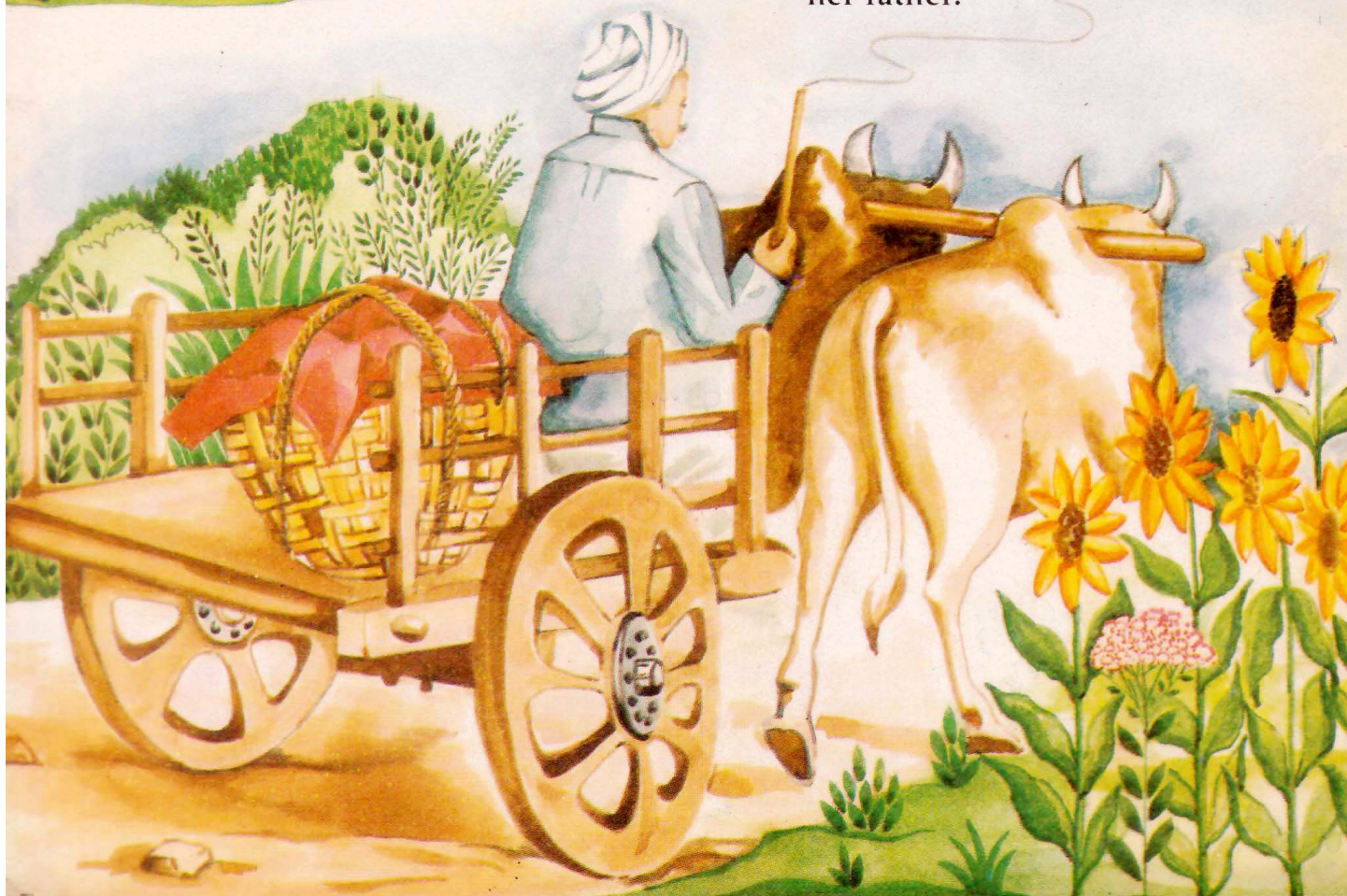Pune 411 016, India.

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Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Niru. She lived in a small village with her parents.

One day, Niru's father went to the town to sell some bags of wheat grown on his farm. While returning home with his purse filled with money, he bought a basket of mangoes for his beloved daughter.

"What have you brought Bapu?" asked Niru, pointing to the basket neatly wrapped in a coloured paper.
"I will tell you tomorrow", said her father.

Next day, Niru's father presented the mangoes to her and said, "Do you know Niru? Today is your birthday. You are four years old now. These mangoes are a birthday gift for you".

Niru had never eaten mangoes before! It was a new experience for her.

While eating the delicious mangoes, Niru curiously asked "Bapu, who prepares such sweet mangoes in the town?"

Niru's father smiled, "Oh baby! These are fruits. They grow on trees".

"Where do the trees come from?" Niru wanted to know.

Niru's mother joined in the conversation, "It is very simple, Niru. When you plant a seed in the field, it sprouts, and a baby plant emerges. With tender care, the plant grows into a tree and produces fruits".

"Oh! Can this seed grow into a tree?" Niru asked, as she sucked the juice from the mango.

"Sure, why don't you try?" asked her father.

"Thank you Bapu. I will plant this seed and watch it grow into a tree", said Niru.

"But you will have to take good care and nurse it like a baby" warned her mother.

"Oh! I would love to do it, Ma. Haven't you seen how I take care of my dolls?"
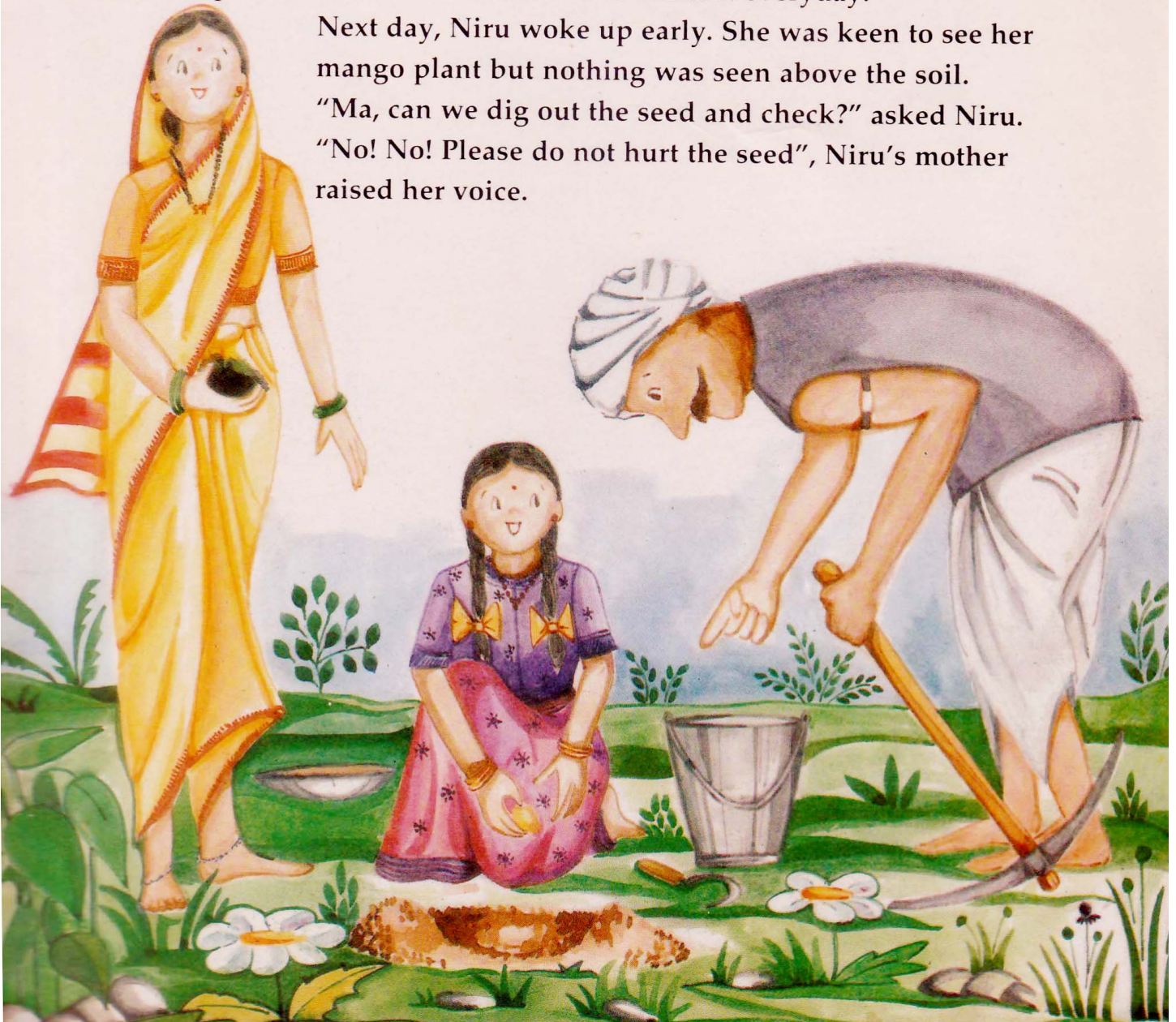
Niru decided to plant the mango seed in her backyard. Her father dug a pit and her mother brought a handful of manure and mixed it with the soil.

Niru placed the seed in the pit and covered it with soil. Her father sprinkled water, to keep the soil wet and told Niru to water it everyday.

Next day, Niru woke up early. She was keen to see her mango plant but nothing was seen above the soil.

"Ma, can we dig out the seed and check?" asked Niru.

"No! No! Please do not hurt the seed", Niru's mother raised her voice.

So, Niru continued to water the seed everyday, without disturbing the soil around it.

After two weeks, Niru saw a pink tender shoot with two small leaves, emerging from the soil. She was filled with joy. She called her parents to see the plant. "Wah! how wonderful! What a beautiful baby plant!" said her father.

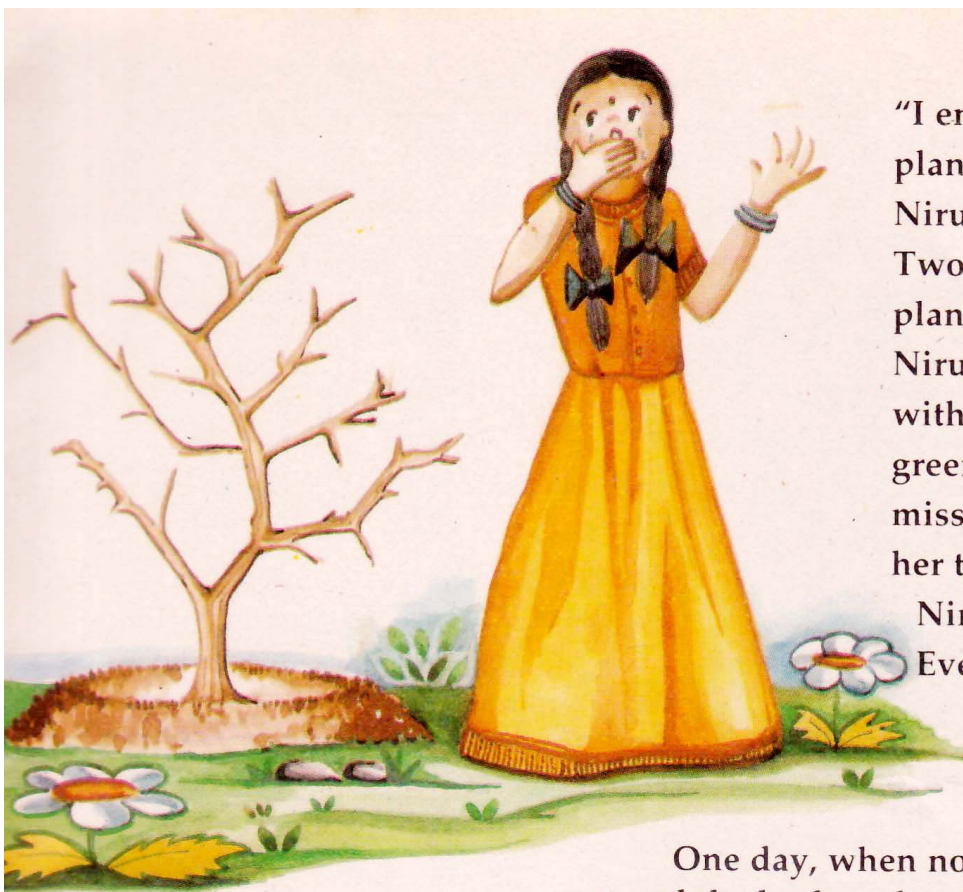"Niru, this is your baby! You should take care of this plant" her mother said. "Oh yes! I am her mother " Niru said with great pride. "Alright ! We are her grand parents!" her parents added.

Niru asked her parents how to bring up the baby mango plant. Her father told her to water the plant during summer and apply manure during monsoon to ensure fast growth. She started taking good care of her baby.

Niru watched the baby plant everyday. In a few days, the pink leaf turned green. The plant produced two more leaves within a week. Gradually, the plant started growing, with many leaves and new branches. Niru's joy also grew with the plant. Niru called her friends to see her baby.

"I enjoy watching my baby plant, whenever I am at home" Niru told her friends.

Two years passed. The mango plant had grown taller than Niru. It had become a bush with several branches, full of green leaves. But Niru never missed a day, looking after her tree.

Niru started going to school. Everyday, before going to school she requested her mother to keep an eye on her tree.

One day, when no one was around, a goat entered the backyard and ate all the leaves of the mango tree. When Niru returned from school, she found her tree damaged. She was hurt and started crying, sitting near her baby tree. Then, her father erected a small fence around the tree and assured her of its safety.

New leaves emerged on the branches within a week. Niru carried a pot of water everyday from the well and sprinkled it around her baby tree. After watering, Niru felt as if the tree smiled with happiness.

One day, Niru's mother got an idea.

"Niru, let us start washing our utensils near your mango tree. Then your baby will grow faster". Just like we eat food, trees absorb plenty of water and nutrients from soil for good growth.

"Thank you Ma. This is a good way to use waste water", Niru said happily. Thereafter, the tree kept growing.

As the tree grew tall, it attracted many beautiful birds. They built their nests and the baby birds played with their parents. Cheek !! Cheek !! as the baby birds cried, the mother birds brought food in their beaks for their little-ones. The mother birds did not have to cook food. Instead, they picked some fruits and worms for their food. Niru enjoyed watching these birds.

Five years passed, since Niru planted the mango. Now the tree had grown very tall. It had covered a large portion of her backyard and kept the surroundings cool. The tree provided good shade for Niru and her friends to play.

During the spring season, Niru noticed new shoots emerging with a bunch of flower buds. She jumped with joy and called her parents to show them her pride. Her parents were very happy.

"Wah ! This tree is going to produce fruits this year! " said her mother in surprise. Niru told her friends in school. They were keen to come and see the flowers on the mango tree. Many of them had never seen such a sight.

Within a few days, the buds opened and the tree was full of flowers. The pleasant fragrance attracted many butterflies, bees and birds.

"Ma, why do these bees attack flowers" Niru asked.

"Don't worry Niru,... bees are useful insects. They come to collect nectar from these tiny flowers and make honey. They also help the tree to bear more fruits by pollinating the flowers. Birds come to catch these insects", her mother assured her.

Within a few weeks, the flowers started dropping, but many green baby fruits were seen clinging together in bunches. Like Niru, her parents watched the tree several times a day.

Niru told all her friends about her baby mango tree bearing fruits.
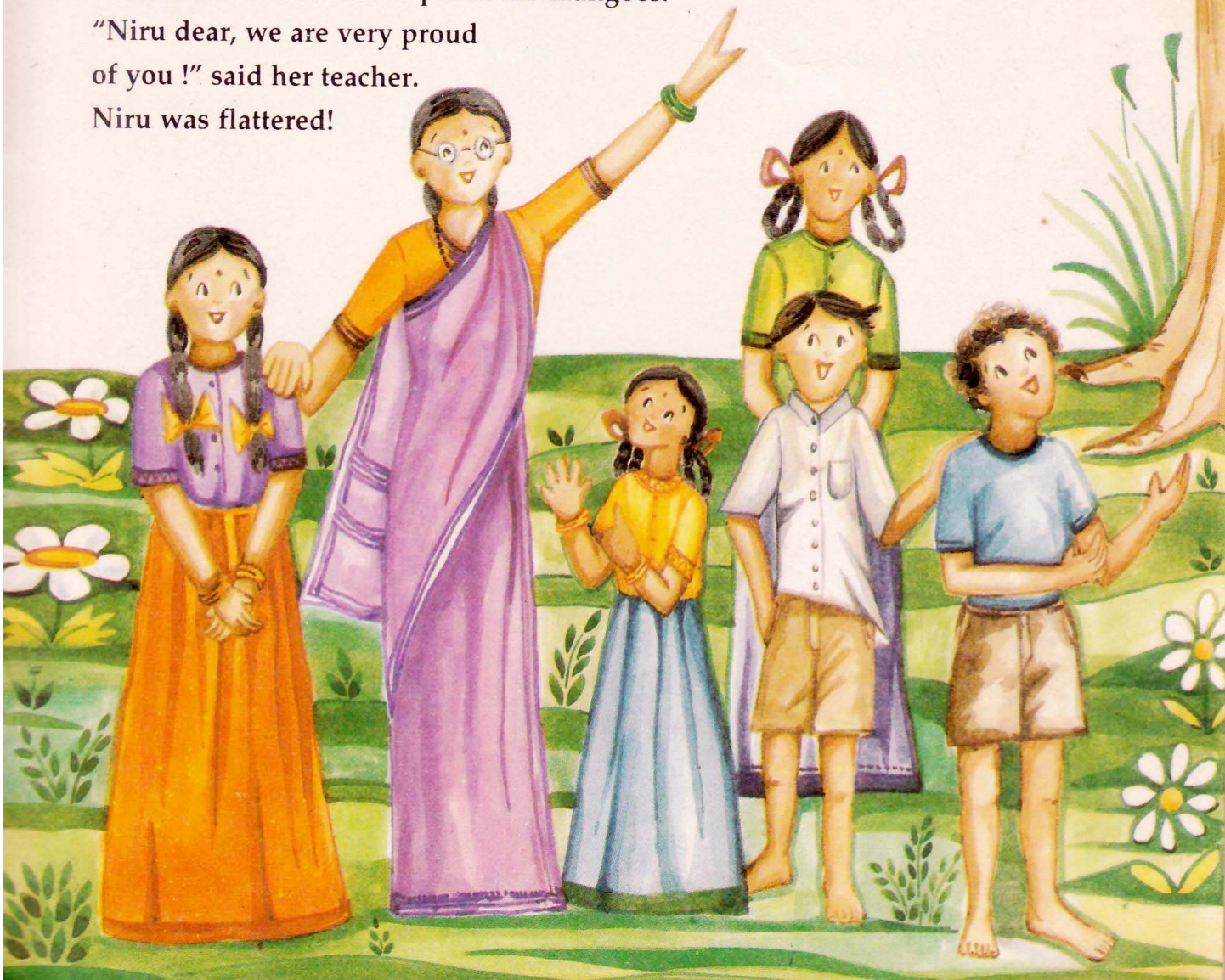
One Saturday, Niru's classmates and her teacher visited her house to see the mangoes. "Wah ! such a young tree is bearing fruits in just six years!" The children were surprised. A few boys climbed the tree.
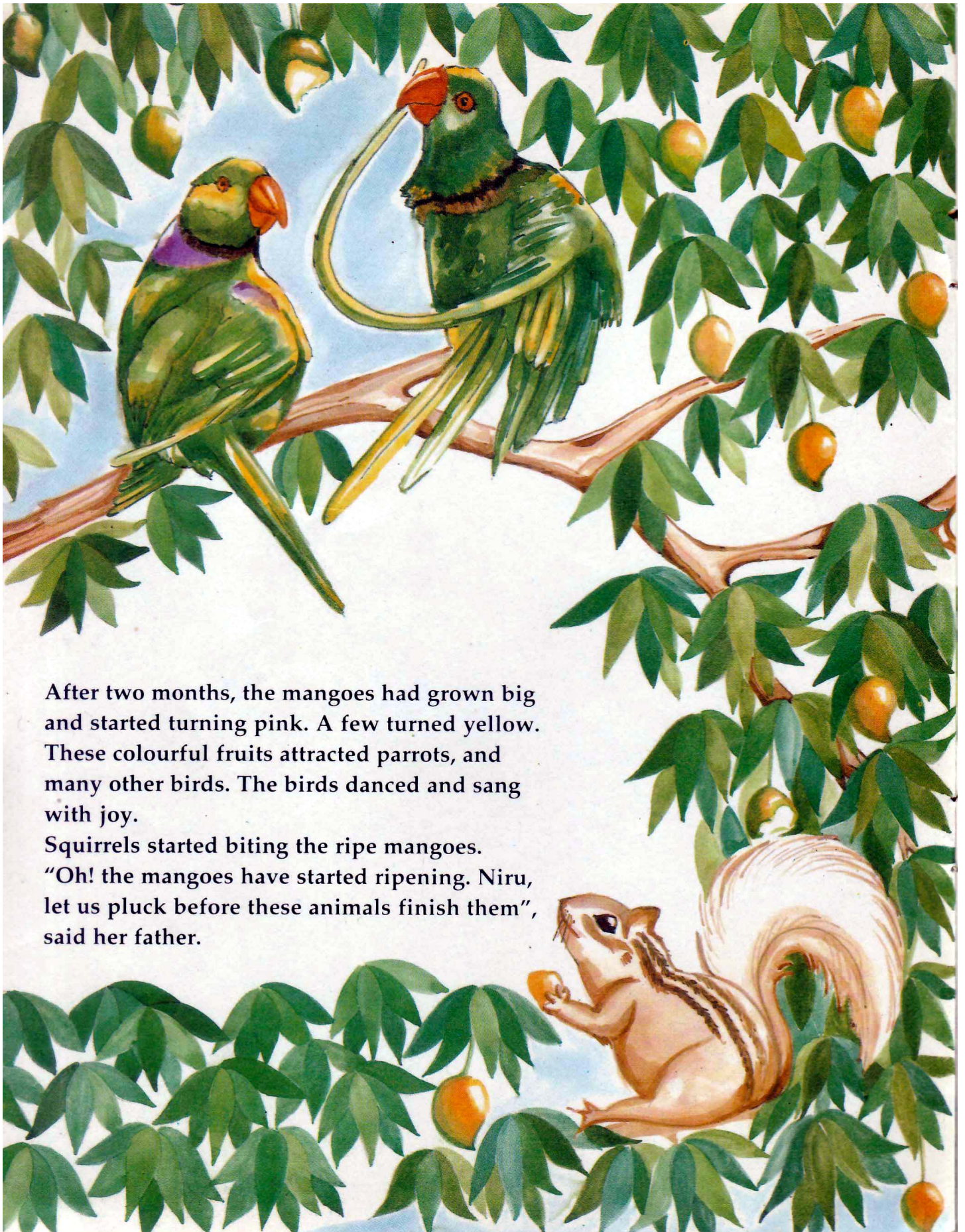Niru warned them not to pluck the mangoes.
"Niru dear, we are very proud of you !" said her teacher.
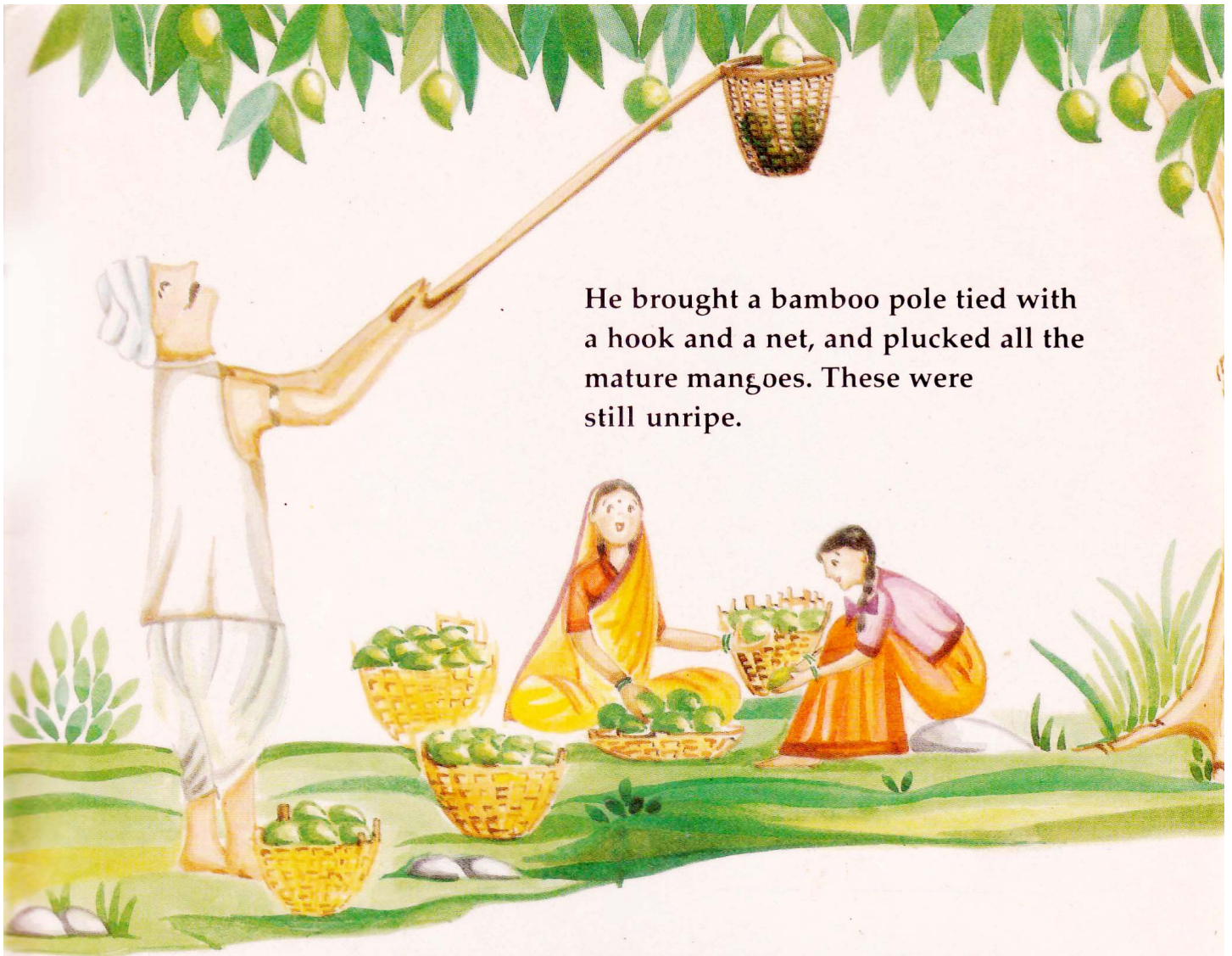Niru was flattered!

After two months, the mangoes had grown big
and started turning pink. A few turned yellow.
These colourful fruits attracted parrots, and
many other birds. The birds danced and sang
with joy.

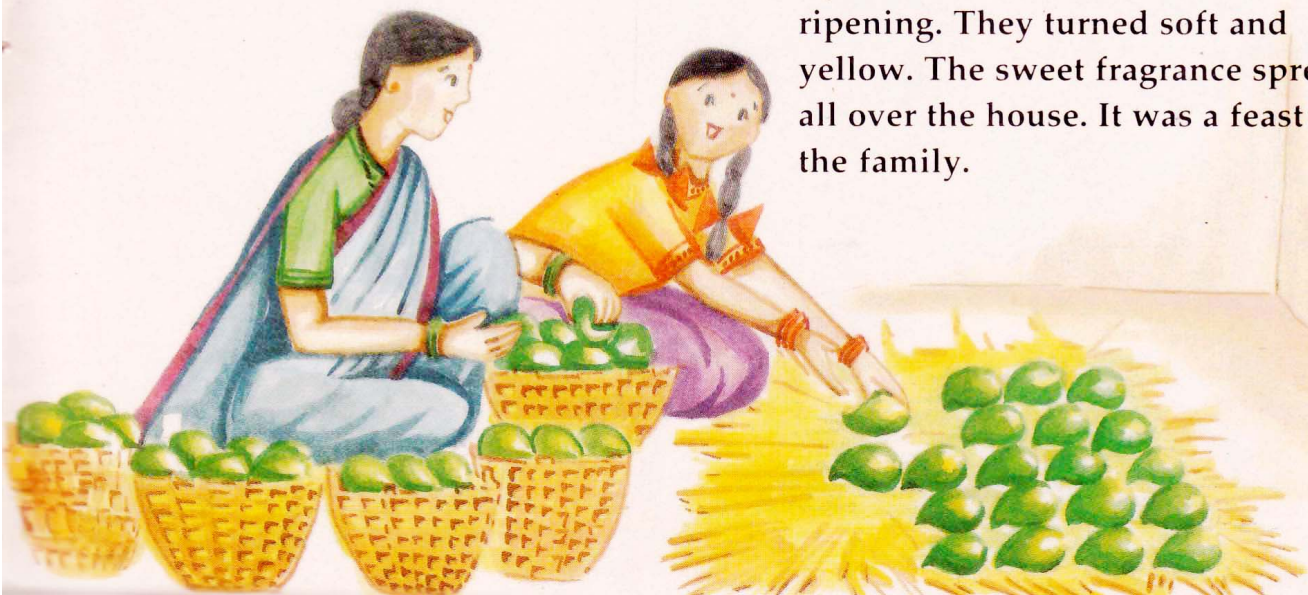Squirrels started biting the ripe mangoes.
"Oh! the mangoes have started ripening. Niru,
let us pluck before these animals finish them",
said her father.

He brought a bamboo pole tied with a hook and a net, and plucked all the mature mangoes. These were still unripe.

Niru's mother cleaned the fruits and laid them on a bed of grass in the store room for ripening.
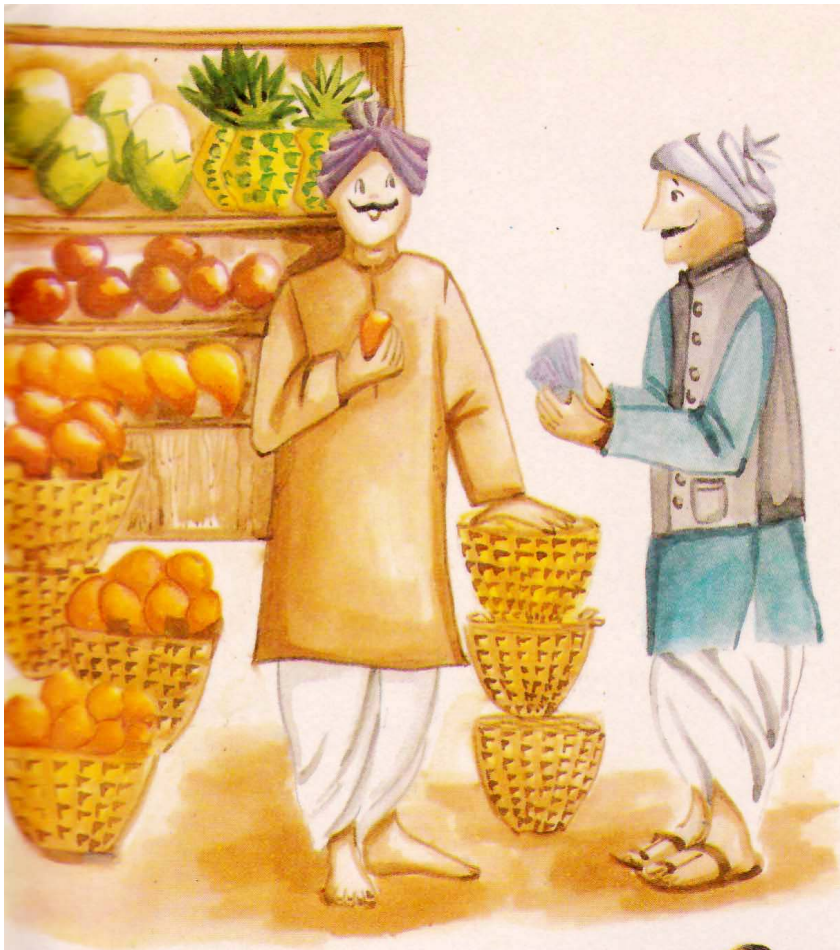
In four days the mangoes started ripening. They turned soft and yellow. The sweet fragrance spread all over the house. It was a feast for the family.

A few days later, it was Niru's birthday again. She invited her friends and neighbours for a party. Niru offered them the delicious mangoes grown on her baby tree and everyone enjoyed them. The children carried the mango seeds and planted them in their backyard.
With every passing year, the mango tree grew bigger and produced more fruits. Niru's parents decided to sell some fruits after keeping enough for themselves.

Her father carried a few baskets of ripe mangoes to the nearby market and sold them for a good sum.

"Niru, this is your money from your mango tree" said her father, showing a bunch of notes.

"Oh! dear! My baby has started supporting our family", Niru's mother said. Little Niru was proud of her tree.
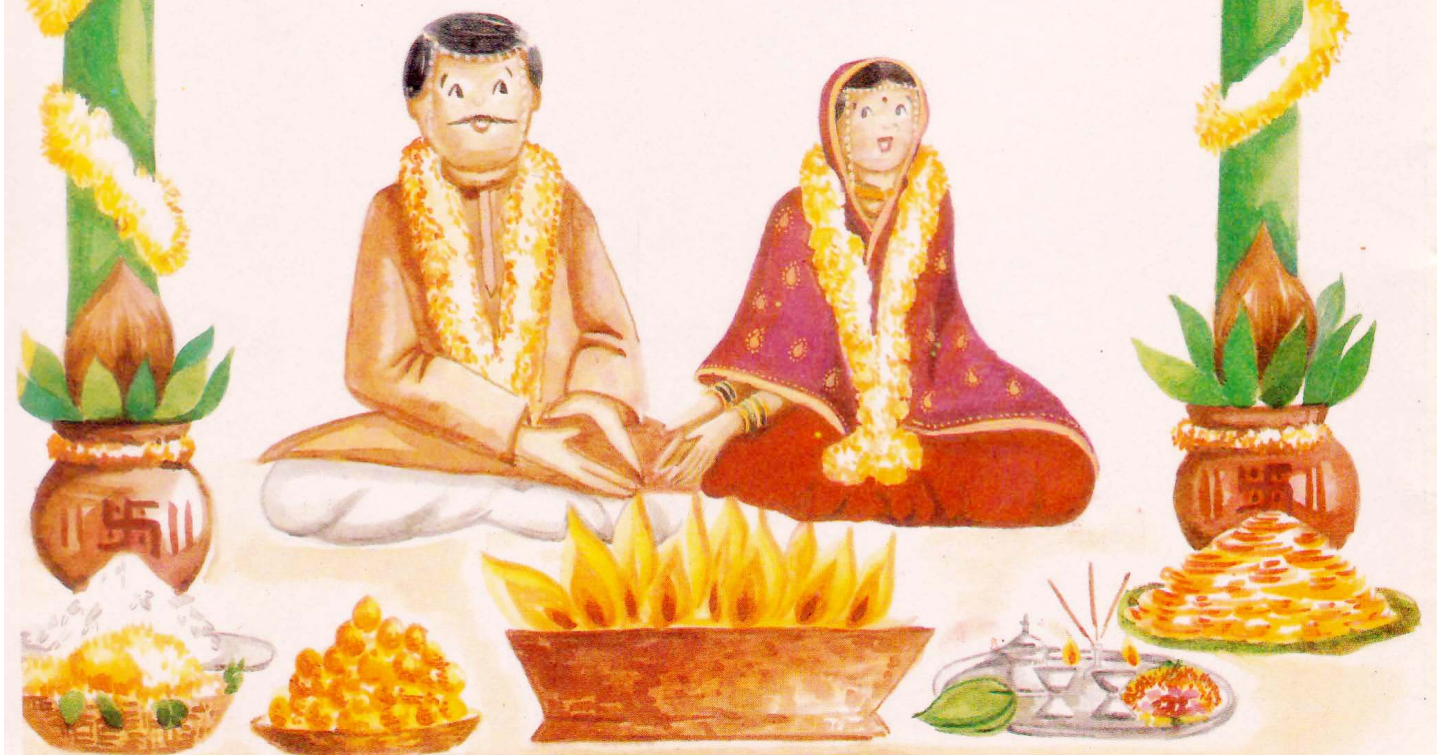
"Let us buy some dresses for you from this money" suggested her mother.

"No Ma, we will buy a sari for you", Niru replied.

"Don't worry ! There is plenty of money to buy a sari, dresses and some ornaments too!" said her father.

The mango tree produced a large number of fruits and earned hundreds of rupees every year. It was a good source of income for Niru's family.
Several years passed. With the mango tree, Niru had also grown up and completed her studies. She got married and went with her husband to live in a town.

In a new place away from her parents and friends, Niru was lonely. She had always wanted to live with her Ma and Bapu and take care of them in their old age.
One day, while remembering her childhood, Niru wrote a letter to her parents :
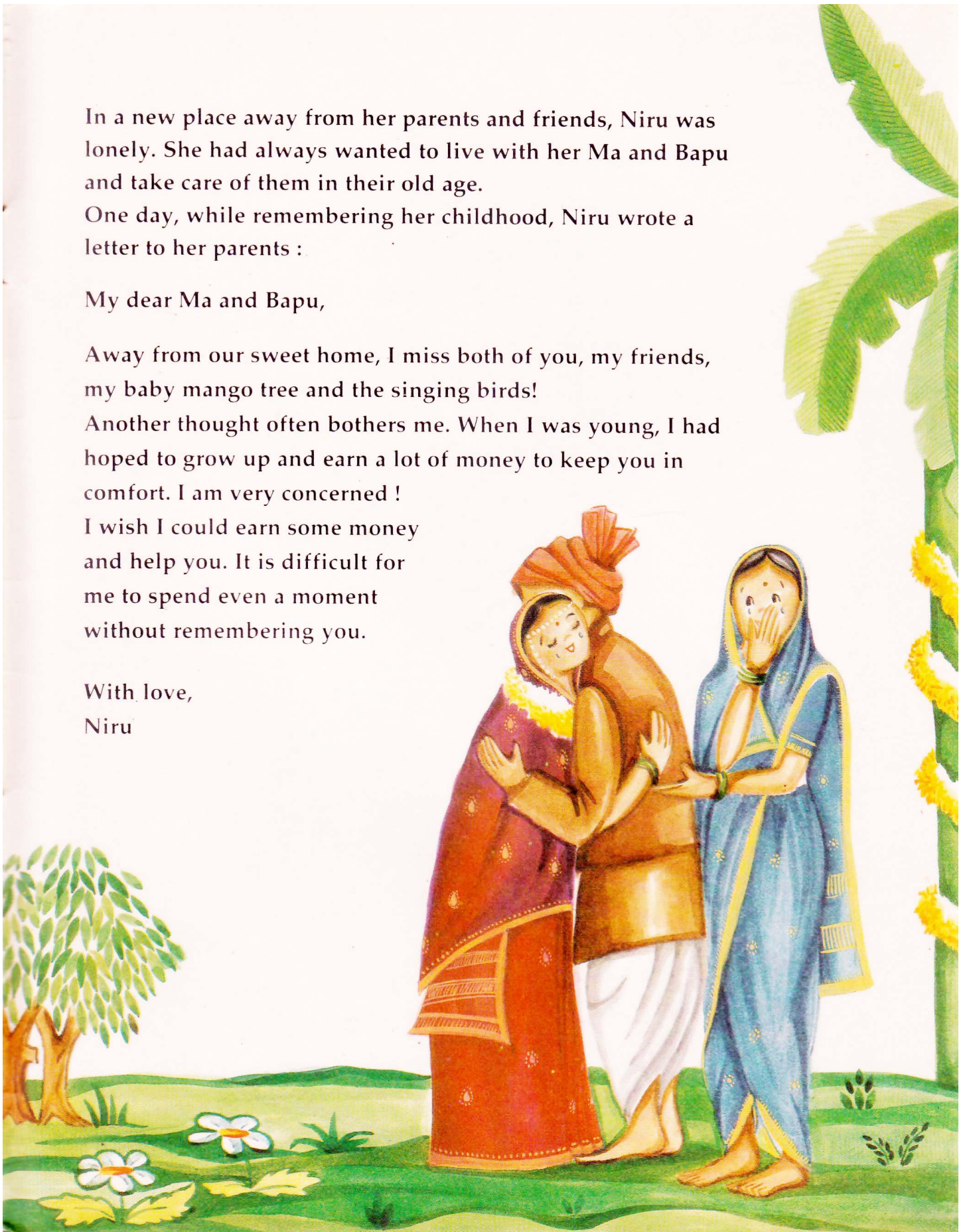
My dear Ma and Bapu,

Away from our sweet home, I miss both of you, my friends, my baby mango tree and the singing birds!
Another thought often bothers me. When I was young, I had hoped to grow up and earn a lot of money to keep you in comfort. I am very concerned !
I wish I could earn some money and help you. It is difficult for me to spend even a moment without remembering you.

With love,
Niru

Niru's parents too were missing Niru. They did not want any money because they were well off. They wrote to Niru :
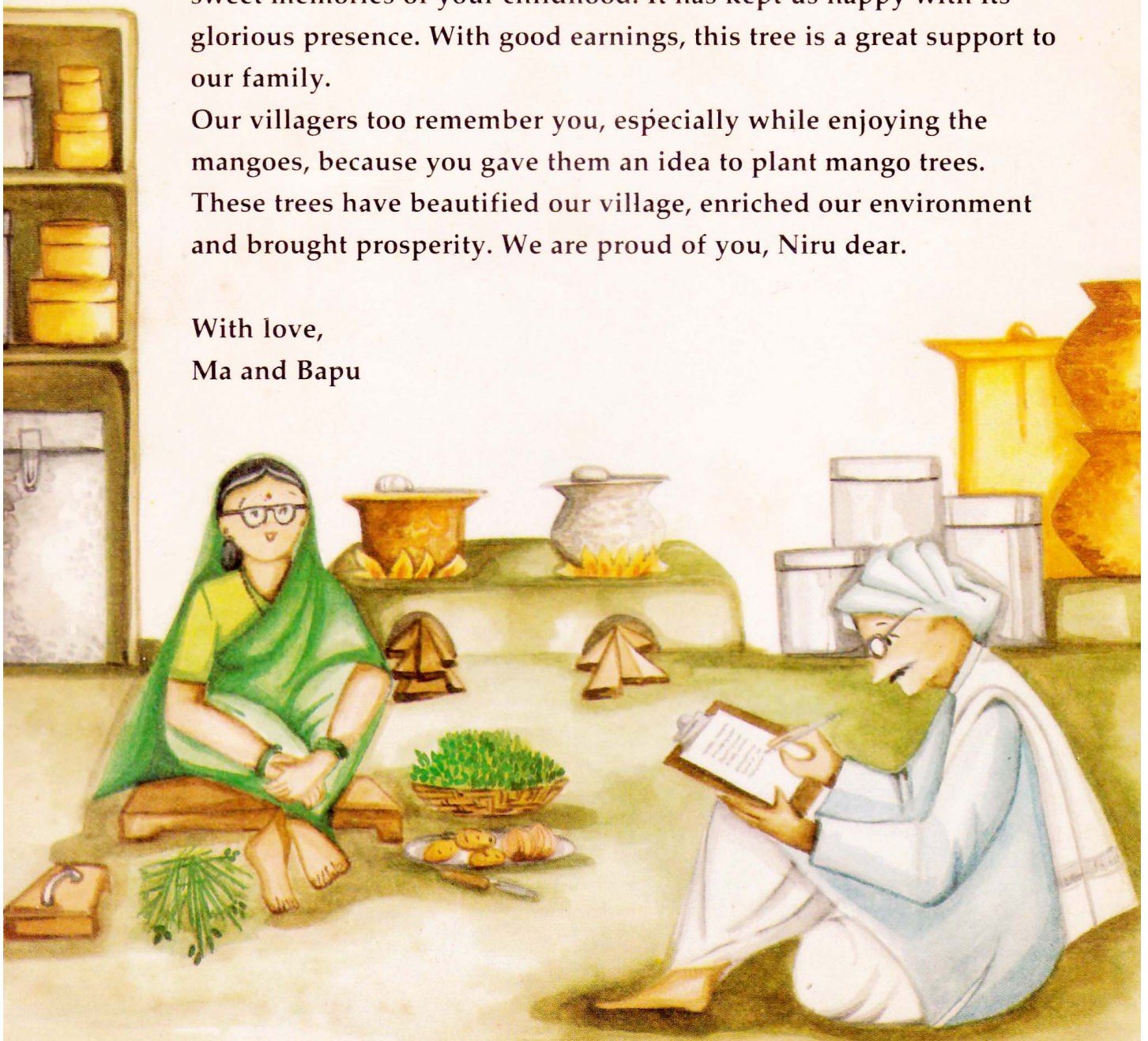
Dear Niru,
Our love, we miss you too! But we are sure, you will soon settle in your new home. Please don't worry about us.
Although we miss you, your baby mango tree keeps bringing back sweet memories of your childhood. It has kept us happy with its glorious presence. With good earnings, this tree is a great support to our family.
Our villagers too remember you, especially while enjoying the mangoes, because you gave them an idea to plant mango trees.
These trees have beautified our village, enriched our environment and brought prosperity. We are proud of you, Niru dear.

With love,
Ma and Bapu

Niru's baby mango tree had brought happiness to her family, and to the entire village. There was greenery in the village and plenty of mangoes for everyone.

About this Story

Dear Reader,

I hope you liked this story, written by
Dr. Narayan Hegde. Niru was a little girl, who did
something which no one in her village had thought
of earlier. Good ideas can come even from you!

I need to give a hint. Niru raised her mango tree
from a seed. However, for growing mangoes of a
good variety, we now have an improved method
called grafting. Grafting is an easy technique and
even you can learn it!

Remember, you can also grow a plant and persuade
others to produce plenty of fruits and enrich the
environment. A good tree is like an earning
member of the family.

Protection of our environment is essential for our
survival. This book, the sixth in BAIF's Nature
Series is another attempt to motivate you to plant
trees and protect them. Green Cross is our symbol
to protect the environment and forests.

Yours lovingly,
Dr. Manibhai Desai
President, BAIF.